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MAY WEATHER AND CROPS

A radio talk by J. B. Kincer, Weather Bureau, delivered through WRC and 42 other radio stations associated with the National Broadcasting Company, June 3, 1931.

There were decided differences in weather conditions, both as to temperature and rainfall, in the United States during May, just closed, and May, last year. Over the eastern half of the country May, as a whole, this year was abnormally cool in nearly all sections, and especially so in the South and interior valleys where the temperature averaged from 3° to as much as 7° below normal. A cool wave about the 20th of the month brought freezing weather as far south as Iowa and Kansas, and more or less frost damage to garden and truck crops occurred over a wide area. The latter part of the month was much warmer and more favorable for crop growth.

Rainfall was very unevenly distributed geographically, but considerable areas, especially in the East, had more than the normal amount. The Atlantic States from northern Florida to New England, including West Virginia, Pennsylvania, and New York, were especially favored with good rains. All of these States had more than normal, and many localities had from one and one-half to twice the normal amount for the month. West of the Appalachian Mountains, however, with the exception of Illinois and Missouri, May rainfall was below normal, the greatest deficiencies being in the northern Great Plains and central Gulf area. Illinois and Missouri had slightly more than normal for the month; but Michigan, Wisconsin, Minnesota, the Dakotas, Nebraska, Iowa, Kentucky, Tennessee, Arkansas, Louisiana, Alabama, and Georgia, had only 60 to about 75 per cent of normal. Ohio and Indiana had about 80 per cent.

In compiling meteorological records, March, April, and May combined are considered the spring season, and June, July, and August the summer. At this time, the beginning of summer, it may be of interest to compare the rainfall for the spring of this year with that of the same season last year. For these three months combined, there has been more than normal rainfall in the Atlantic States, from North Carolina northward, and including West Virginia, with the heaviest amounts in New York, the Virginias, and Maryland. These States had 10 to 20 per cent above normal for the three months, while last spring they had large deficiencies, being mostly about 40 per cent below normal in the Potomac drainage basin. The Virginias, Maryland, and North Carolina had from 60 to 80 per cent more this spring than last spring.

The three months were drier than normal in all other States east of the Rocky Mountains, except Kansas which had somewhat more than normal rainfall. The deficiencies in the Ohio and middle Mississippi Valleys, however, where the drought was especially severe last year, were generally small, being only mostly 10 to 15 per cent, compared with deficiencies of 40 to 45 per cent last year. Kentucky, Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, and Missouri had mostly from 45 to 75 per cent more rain this spring than last spring, notwithstanding the amounts were again below normal.

Most of the Southern States had somewhat less rain this spring than last. However, May, last year, had excessively heavy rains in much of the South, including Arkansas, which made the spring total comparatively large.

Considerably less rain fell this spring than last spring over a large area of the Northwest, between the Lake region and Rocky Mountains, especially in Nebraska, the Dakotas, and Montana; where the amounts were 20 to 40 per cent below those of a year ago. The Pacific Northwest, especially eastern Washington, and Oregon, continue distressingly dry, and crops are suffering severely, especially winter wheat.

To summarize, at the beginning of summer, we find the Atlantic States, and the Ohio and middle Mississippi Valleys much better supplied with moisture than a year ago, especially the Atlantic States where rains have been heavy. Most of the South and Northwest, however, have less soil moisture than at this time last year. Rain is badly needed over considerable areas of the far West and Northwest, while the need of moisture is becoming apparent over the section of the country extending from central Kentucky to the Gulf coast. All other areas, in general, have enough for present needs.

Corn planting is about completed and the recent warmer weather had been decidedly beneficial, while showers during the past week were helpful, especially in the upper Mississippi Valley. More than the usual amount of replanting is indicated, however, largely because of widespread infestation of cutworms. Winter wheat continues to make good to excellent progress rather generally in the principal producing sections, except in the far Northwest. The crop has been damaged severely in the interior of the North Pacific States, and some is about gone in the drier sections. Wheat is ripening fast in southern Oklahoma, and harvest is expected to begin in about two weeks in extreme southern Kansas. Rains this past week were very helpful to spring wheat, especially in the central portions of the belt, but the more eastern and more western sections are unfavorably dry. Considerable flax had to be replanted in north-Central States, because of damage by frost, but oats are making good progress generally. The growth of cotton was rather slow during the month, because of continued cool weather in Southern States, but higher temperatures near its close were more favorable.